8:Qubain S-5 (1952-53)1955 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

Over 61 percent of this population lives in the three towns of Manamah, Muharraq, and Hedd:[5] the rest, 38.5 percent, is scattered about in 90 villages and hamlets concentrated mostly in the northern and northeastern tip of the largest island. In the 9-year period between the two censuses the population had increased 22 percent, mainly in the three towns mentioned. The village population remained almost stationary (actually an absolute increase of 3.5 percent and a relative decrease of 5.5 percent). The concentration of increase in the towns can be explained by the better sanitary conditions existing there and the influx of foreigners. Evidently there was little local migration during this period from village to town, although in some cases it was found that villages had been deserted or greatly reduced in size.[6] It is interesting to note that the only population movement took place in some of the Arab Sunni villages.[7]

Tables I and III are in a certain sense misleading, for they give a false picture of homogeneity in the population (84 percent Bahrain subjects, 96 percent Muslims) that does not exist. Society in Bahrain is divided into several groupings, in most cases distinct and recognizable. Association with one group in many instances implies a certain occupational specialization, but the main forces that have determined social division are religion, tribal loyalties, and nationality.

THE SHI'IS AND THE SUNNIS

The Muslim Arab population of Bahrain is divided into Shi'is and Sunnis, who in almost all cases never live in the same village. The Shi'is live in their own tightly-knit communities and do not intermix with the rest of the population to any considerable degree. Fighting — especially in the larger towns, when the two communities do come into contact — frequently breaks out between the two groups, necessitating the intervention of the police and even the British navy.[8] A recent index of the feeling between the two groups is the fact that for the last several years there has been no municipal council for the capital city, Manamah, for the simple reason that no agreement could be reached on the number of seats to be allotted each of the two Muslim groups.

Aside from the small minority of Persians, the Shi'is are all Baharnah. There is no agreement as to the ethnic origin of these people; however, they now speak Arabic and are regarded as Arabs. They are the oldest group among the present inhabitants of the shaykhdom and have been subjected through the centuries to successive conquests, so that altho gh at present they equal or exceed the Sunnis in number — as the 1941 census

[5] See Table II.
[6] *Census 1950*, p. 6.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[8] Abbas Faroughly, *The Bahrain Islands* (New York, 1951), p. 99.